

NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES

Volume IV, Number 2 - May 1945

WHY READ?

By William T. Polk, Greensboro Daily News

Librarians must take up educating people where the school leaves off. Education does not end at 17 or 21; it starts there, if anywhere. North Carolina asked for an educated man and got a football fan. Formal education fails in so far as its graduates turn to comic books and sports for sustenance and stimulation; librarians succeed in so far as they turn adults from Superman to Plato, from football to the Federalist papers.

Many graduate from high school or even college without having read a Greek play, a Chinese poem, a Russian novel, a Hindu Upanishad, a page from Leonardo da Vinci's notebooks, a chapter of The Federalist or a book of the Bible. They are therefore completely uneducated.

But the school should not be blamed too much. Education is a lifelong process requiring a mature mind which has come in contact with the roughness of the world. Books "teach not their own use." It is the business of the school to teach students the use of those tools, books, by which they can educate themselves. To do that and to inspire them with a desire to use those tools is about all the school can do. The public library can do the rest; it can provide them with the tools which they have been taught, not without labor and expense, to use.

The world of books is a pre-Einstein universe—without limits—a continent without a coast, a sea without a shore yet with many pleasant islands for the voyager. There is so great a joy in reading—say, in discovering the story of Aucassin and Nicolette, the poems of John Donne and Francis Thompson, or the novels of Hardy and Conrad—that many who fall under its spell would not willingly swap it for any other earthly pleasure.

But there is much more to it than that. The very preservation of Western civilization depends on how well and widely we read. No one is born civilized; he attains that state if he can. Hitler came near dissolving our civilization in a solution of blood because so many supposedly educated

people were unable to distinguish between evil incarnate and "the wave of the future." How close it came to extinction may be measured by the difference between the minds of Chamberlain and Churchill. Chamberlain did not believe in Hitler any more than we believe in a personal devil; Churchill recognized Hitler for what he was because reading had familiarized him with Hitler's prototypes—Iago and the villain of the Book of Genesis.

No one can know what is true without knowing what is false; no one can know what is good without knowing what is evil. The search to differentiate between them is what makes great literature. Now, when the foundations of society totter, we need, as never before, to resume that search. Therefore we need the help which great books alone can bring us—the dramas of Aeschylus and Euripides; the dialogues of Plato; the serenity of Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus; the vivid pictures of society in turmoil painted by Thucydides, Tacitus, Plutarch, Suetonius and Gibbon; those expert vivisections of the human spirit performed by Machiavelli and Dante; the Bible with varied illuminating interpretations from St. Augustine's *Confessions* to Renan's *Life of Jesus* and Wilde's *De Profundis*; the poems of Shakespeare and Shelley; the second part of Goethe's *Faust*, Shaw's *St. Joan*, and Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness* which gives a preview of Hitler; the two most Christian novelists, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy; Hegel, Darwin, Marx and Hitler; and last but not least Arnold J. Toynbee's *A Study of History*, giving hope that a civilization which could produce such a work is not destined to perish yet awhile.

Is it really so important that such books be read? It cannot be doubted. The roots of our civilization are two—one reaching back to Judea, the other to Athens. It draws life from them only through the written word. There is no more illuminating experience than to read the Bible and the great Greek plays together, and to feel the power and glory of man's search for goodness. Did not our democracy come to us, starting from Judea, running thence to the Rome of Terence ("I am a man and so I think that nothing human can be foreign to me"), the Carthage of Tertullian ("Throughout the world man is one though his names be various") and so by a winding road to the Monticello of Jefferson and the Camden of Whitman? Who learns these things by reading knows beyond peradventure the foundations on which western civilization rests. And there is no other way to distinguish between good and evil, or to assess values truly.

It is not encouraging to reflect that 60 years ago we were nearer in mind and spirit to great books than we are today, with the result that we are now wandering in a wilderness of vapid magazines, moving pictures and radio programs, art and music inspired by primitive Africa and psychopathy,

political isms put forth by those "who darken counsel with words without knowledge."

Our education has been neglected by the librarians. The schools can go no further. It is up to the librarians to use every method—advertisement and imprecation, force and arms, hook or crook, fasting and prayer—to get us back in touch with that great literature which is at once the rock from which our civilization was hewn and the flame in which it must be continually tempered if it is to thumb its nose at Fate.

PUBLIC LIBRARY LEGISLATION - GENERAL ASSEMBLY 1945

State Aid for Public Libraries was voted by the 1945 General Assembly, as recommended by the Advisory Budget Commission, at \$175,000 for each year of the biennium. If this amount is divided equally among the 100 counties, \$1,660 will be allocated each county for the years 1945-1946, 1946-1947. The request for \$225,000 which was originally made would have meant an additional \$600 for each county. During 1944-45, the eighty-two counties will each receive \$1,400, for the non-participating counties' share has been reallocated to the participating counties.

State Aid for Public Libraries was the second item on the program of the State Legislative Council. Librarians and people interested in library service are grateful to the members of the Legislative Council for their work in the various counties.

Seven bills, three state-wide and four local, affecting public libraries were presented and all, but one, were passed. Senator Lawrence Wallace introduced two bills to re-write sections of the General Statutes relating to public libraries. SB 53 made provisions for appointing library trustees, terms of office and duties in joint libraries where two or more counties contract for service. SB 54 provides for a new registration in library elections and for an increase or decrease in the library tax voted at a prior election. These two bills were passed.

SB 55 which would have permitted counties to levy a tax for public library purposes without a vote of the people, was reported unfavorably by the House Finance Committee.

Local bills affecting public library service were passed for Cumberland, Gaston, and Mecklenburg Counties.

The Legislators were better informed about libraries than ever before and their attitude and interest was decidedly encouraging.

TAR HEEL LIBRARY NOTES

In February Sarah Bowling became cataloger for the Alabama Public Library Service Division. Her successor as order librarian at Woman's College of the University of North Carolina is Mary Robert Seawell.

Mrs. Hallie Sykes Bacelli is now supervisor of the elementary school libraries in Charlotte. She was formerly stationed at Library No. 1, Camp Mackall.

Dora Ruth Parks, formerly librarian of the Nantahala Regional Library at Murphy, is now executive secretary of the West Virginia Library Commission.

Christine Coffey has resigned her position as head of the circulation department at State College, Raleigh, to join the staff of the library of Louisiana State University.

A valuable source for biography and genealogy by Carrie L. Broughton, librarian of the State Library, is published in the *Biennial Report of the State Librarian, 1942 to 1944* (Raleigh, 1945). It is "Marriage and Death Notices from *Raleigh Register and North Carolina State Gazette, 1799-1825*."

Evelyn L. Parks, formerly librarian of Pack Memorial Library, Asheville, is filling a temporary vacancy as public library consultant with the Michigan State Library.

ADULT EDUCATION AND THE LIBRARY

By Evelyn L. Parks

The term adult education as we now use it was conceived twenty-five years ago in the period following the European War to name the movement for post-school education which grew out of a need for adjustment to a changing world. Now another war has brought even greater changes and a far greater impetus to this movement. The library is the logical agency for leadership in this field since it is the depository of the means for self-education.

Education denotes acquisition of learning by an individual, enabling him to develop his various abilities and interests and by that process preparing himself for a more intelligent participation in affairs. Through such a process he fits himself to play an active part in a democratic society. The change which we are now undergoing from a simpler pattern into the

complexity of a world not yet made one but fast moving that way outreaches education and demands continuance of learning beyond school years.

The public library (and for that matter all libraries), as James Truslow Adams points out in his *Frontiers of American Culture*, has a particularly great opportunity in the field of adult education. Libraries are open to all the public in a real sense. The librarian's opportunity is greater when taken in the light of Alvin Johnson's opinion that adult education "cannot thrive under compulsion and rewards" since the adult need is not for a teacher but a "leader." Here is an opportunity for a librarian to lead as never before, to emerge from his seclusion as book selector, lender, or keeper, into group leadership. Johnson calls attention to the need for "group activity" as a part of educational activity. Group education has been sponsored for many years by women's clubs who have furnished a great impetus to adult education.

The librarian's part in adult education is compulsory at this time, having been pushed on us by the national and international crisis. There will be a greater number of men and women returning from the armed services to civilian life than at any other time, from ten to eleven million from military service along with the reshuffling of some twenty-one million who will be going from war essential work into peace-time living. Every person will have his own problem of adjustment. Some of these problems are not solved by learning to do but by learning to think.

Mr. Ulveling in his "Large Public Library" in the *A.L.A. Bulletin* of December 1, 1944, suggests three things which are basic in adult education: First, we "must build activities entirely around the idea of serving human needs." Second, we "must forsake our time-honored neutrality on every subject and take a positive position on those issues that threaten our society." Third, we "must find the resources for this program within our present organization." We can't wait to rebuild our staffs and we can't wait to increase our book funds. The job is now and it must be done even though the essentials of books and staff must be built along with our services.

Service to the returning veteran is perhaps the most urgent and practical need. The library should be ready for him: to assist one to return to his former position; to adjust one to the change he wishes to make; to help one train himself who has never been employed; to aid one who is physically handicapped; to direct one to recreational reading. We must not only have the books and other materials ready for the user, but, much more important, we must have someone who can help bring the man and the book together. This service does not stop with the person who chances to come into a library building.

THE ROWAN PUBLIC LIBRARY

By Mrs. Claude S. Morris, Trustee

Salisbury, an old cultural town in the Piedmont section, had no public library until 1910 when a study club, "The Travelers," decided there must be free books for all. The idea grew; an enthusiastic campaign for books and funds resulted in the opening of a long-desired public library in the little house on the corner of the Boyden lot—often mistaken for Andrew Jackson's law office which formerly stood nearby.

A volunteer librarian and library committee kept all going so well that the county and city included the library in their 1921 budgets and the county provided rooms in the Community Building. The library committee became the Board of Trustees of the Salisbury Public Library!

Soon there were a few borrowers from the county and some took books on consignment for others in their neighborhood. The Home Demonstration Clubs played an important role in establishing book stations in the county and in building up county service throughout the years.

Since its organization in 1923, the Salisbury Woman's Club has made an annual contribution and has also supervised book festivals, story hours, library teas and art exhibits to create more interest in the library. The Junior Woman's Club has given tables, chairs and books for the children's room and now operates the hospital branch. Other civic and patriotic organizations, the city recreation program, the local paper and radio station have all been most co-operative in publicizing and promoting the library. More and more it has become a community interest.

In 1935 new members were added to the Board of Trustees. A trained librarian was employed early in 1936 and re-organization effected according to the standards of the American Library Association and North Carolina Library Commission. The name was changed to the Rowan Public Library.

The W.P.A. library project with its book-mending, its bookmobile and additional staff personnel was a vital factor at that period of development. Too much cannot be said in appreciation of State Aid coming when more books were a necessity if library expansion was to be a fact rather than an idle dream of librarian and trustees.

The Board of Trustees has sent representatives to national and state meetings to get first-hand information as to library trends. They are now making a study of "Post-War Standards for Public Libraries."

It is most significant that two recently formed groups, The Salisbury Community Foundation and the Citizens Planning Committee, have included the library in their planning for community development. This recognition as an important public service agency demands that the library be "geared to the times and ready to meet the demands and opportunities of the post-war period."

A meeting of trustees of all branches and other friends of the library is being planned, a library survey is in the offing, an assistant with some library training and experience will be added to the staff in June. There have been discouragements and at times progress was too slow, but always better days seemed just around the corner so the staff, trustees, and other interested citizens "make big plans, aim high in *hope* and *work*."

PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE

Reviewed by Roseanne Hudson, Woman's College Library, U.N.C.

In these busy days, most of us feel that we are doing well if we are able to read our library journals. Yet, there is a great deal of valuable material about libraries and library service in articles published in the periodicals of other fields.

The recently published Pictorial Library Primer (Library research service, 1944, \$.99) by Mrs. Winifred L. Davis should be particularly helpful for volunteers who have had no special training in library procedure. Simply written and copiously illustrated, the Primer carefully explains each step which a book undergoes in being added to a library.

If you are occasionally wont to agree with the oft-expressed opinion of many of our patrons that libraries are dull, musty places in which to work, you may find an antidote for that feeling in Rudolph Altrocchi's *Sleuthing in the Stacks* (Harvard University press, 1944, \$3.50). Mr. Altrocchi has managed to write an interesting and entertaining account of his adventures with books as a research scholar.

TAR HEEL LIBRARY NOTES

Mrs. Muriel S. Jordan, outstanding among children's librarians of the state, recently resigned after fifteen years with the Durham Public Library. Before coming to North Carolina she served as children's librarian in the New York Public Library, the Carnegie Library of Pittsburg, the Madison, Wis., Free Library, and the Lawson McGhee Library in Knoxville. Following a year as cataloger of both adult and juvenile books for the

Durham library, she became children's librarian in September, 1931. Her work since then has included organizing public library work with schools in Durham, assisting both city and county schools in reorganizing their own libraries, and organizing in 1943 the Y. E. Smith Branch of the Durham Public Library. In addition, she has taught since 1938 in the summer sessions of the Library School in Chapel Hill. Her successor, Merna J. Cox, formerly children's librarian in Rock Hill, South Carolina, began work on April 1.

THE LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT FUND

On February 22nd Hoyt R. Galvin, State Director for the campaign for the Library Development Fund; Marjorie Beal of the Library Commission; Mary Peacock Douglas, State School Library Adviser; Julius Amis, Supervisor of Rural Libraries; and Susan Grey Akers, President of the Association, met in Raleigh to hear Mr. Galvin's report on the conference called by the American Library Association in Chicago and to plan the campaign in North Carolina. When Mr. Galvin was later called by the Army, his duties were taken over by Julius Amis and A. B. Yeomans, Library Trustee of Southern Pines. Letters were sent out to librarians, trustees, and interested citizens.

OFFICERS OF THE NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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1st Vice-President: Mrs. Mary D. Grant, Cataloger and Library Consultant, Public Schools, Greensboro

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LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT FUND

promoted by
THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE FUND?

To maintain a library representative in Washington and to carry on a national public relations program supporting the development of good library service for all citizens.

WHY DO LIBRARIES NEED REPRESENTATION?

Because every library and librarian is affected by federal laws and regulations of increasing number and importance. Because many of the thirty-five million Americans without public library service will continue without it for a long time unless there is federal aid. Because good libraries for all citizens are a basic necessity in a thriving democracy.

WHAT IS THE GOAL?

\$105,000 for four years of activity.

Total contributions received by Treasurer through June 7th, \$940.42.

North Carolina's goal: \$2,200.

It is not too late. Send your contribution to the Treasurer of the Association.

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